FRONTISPIECE.

SIR FILMER HOPEWELL.

VILLAGE ANNALS,

CONTAINING

AUSTERUS AND HUMANUS.

A SYMPATHETIC TALE.

EMBELLISHED WITH FINE ENGRAVINGS.

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VILLAGE ANNALS.

IT was in that season of the year when nature wears an universal gloom, and the pinching frost arrests the running stream in its course, and gives a

massy solidity to the lake that lately curled with every breeze, that Sir Filmer Hopewell, having lost his road in the Dale of Tiviot, was met by two youths that swiftly skimmed the surface of the slippery brook, and sought an antidote against the inclement cold in the wholesome though dangerous exercise of skaiting. Of these hale and ruddy young villagers he enquired his road, or where he might meet with a lodging for the night, for the sun was declining in the shades of evening fast encompassing the dale. They directed him to the summit of a neighbouring hill, on the declivity of which there stood a small village, where probably

he might meet with accommodation. Though wearied and fatigued, this information gave him vigour, and he hastened up the hill, and soon beheld with pleasure, beheld the sign of the Lion and Dog; that on a lofty post invited to the village ale-house. He entered it a seasonable and salutary asylum from the wintry blast, and was conducted into a neat little parlour, with a cheerful fire. Being seated, his host quickly made his appearance, with such refreshment as his house afforded. Sir Filmer, on his first entering, immediately perceived there was *character* in his countenance; a quick dark eye and sharp features that gave him that appearance

of intellect, which is seldom found to be belied upon further acquaintance. He therefore gave him an invitation to spend an hour or two with him; which he accepted without hesitation: and after taking a bumper to the health of his guest, entertained him with numerous anecdotes of the village.

"You must, at this inclement season," said Sir Filmer, "witness many scenes of distress, and have many calls upon your humanity." "Yes," replied the worthy man, the tear glistening in his eye, "to weep with those that weep, to lighten the burden of human woe, and to administer comfort to the deject-

ed soul, are offices, to the exercise of which, we have frequent calls. Having lived here for some years, and being well known, I am sometimes called to the houses of neighbouring peasants, in which poverty and affliction seem to have taken up their abode; yet, believe me, sir, I never return from those houses with greater pleasure, or with more heart-felt satisfaction, than when I think I have contributed my share in wiping away the falling tear, or whispering peace to the troubled breast.

" Small, however, sir, as the village is, it produces two characters, as opposite almost in their natures, as the dark-

ness of a stormy night is to the splendour of meridian day. These characters as they are unknown to you, allow me to introduce to your acquaintance, under the names of *Austerus* and *Humanus;* the former a man of callous soul; the latter one who thinks, and feels while he thinks.

"*Austerus* possesses a fortune of three thousand pounds a-year, has an elegant house, and keeps a large retinue.

"His lands yield abundant crops, and his flocks are heard bleating on the neighbouring hills. His tenants are pretty numerous, and his dependants many.

Character of Austerus.

" One would imagine," says Sir Filmer, " this man was destined by heaven, as a blessing to the part of the country in which he lives; that the families around him, would hail him as their liberal benefactor, and that his domestics would bless the hour in which they entered his spacious hall."

" However natural this conclusion, Sir," replied the host, " it is far from being well founded. Extremely passionate, he rages and storms; and even after the storm has subsided, his face bespeaks the anger which he can ill conceal. Sour and austere, haughty and overbearing, he is dreaded by his ser-

vants, and despised by all. His tenants, whose lands are rented to the full, barely subsist, and regret the moment they were so unfortunate as to tread the ground of hard oppression; one of which—poor man!—how often have I witnessed the tear drop from his eye, on the approach of quarter-day, when, with the spade in his hand, he ceased from toil, to awaken bitter reflections over the sad state of a destitute family.

" But what adds an indelible stain to the character of *Austerus*, is that he is hard-hearted to the poor, and unfeeling to the sons of distress. It is a painful truth, that his cane has been lifted up

over the head of poverty, as it approached his lordly door to beg a pittance. What! O hardened *Austerus!* were riches given thee to indulge thy pampered carcase, and to steel thy heart against thy poorer *brethren?* for the shivering beggar at the gate is still thy brother!

"This I have frequently witnessed with a poor old woman, who travels round the country with laces and other little things, and asks the boon of the wealthy, to enable her to exist; while his children, who dare not, with his knowledge, assist her, let down trifles from their chamber window, to relieve

this poor old creature, bent with the winters that have past over her head.

" Besides the poor, Sir, the afflicted, who are tossed on the bed of sickness, implore his assistance in vain. Pity is even denied them.

" I ventured once to recommend to him a peasant's family, in the neighbourhood, on whom affliction's rod had suddenly fallen, by sad accident. As they were boiling their frugal meal of potatoes, the vessel upset, and scalded the father and one of the children most dreadfully.

" While I related these circumstances

to him, a tear, some how or other, had forced its way down my cheek.

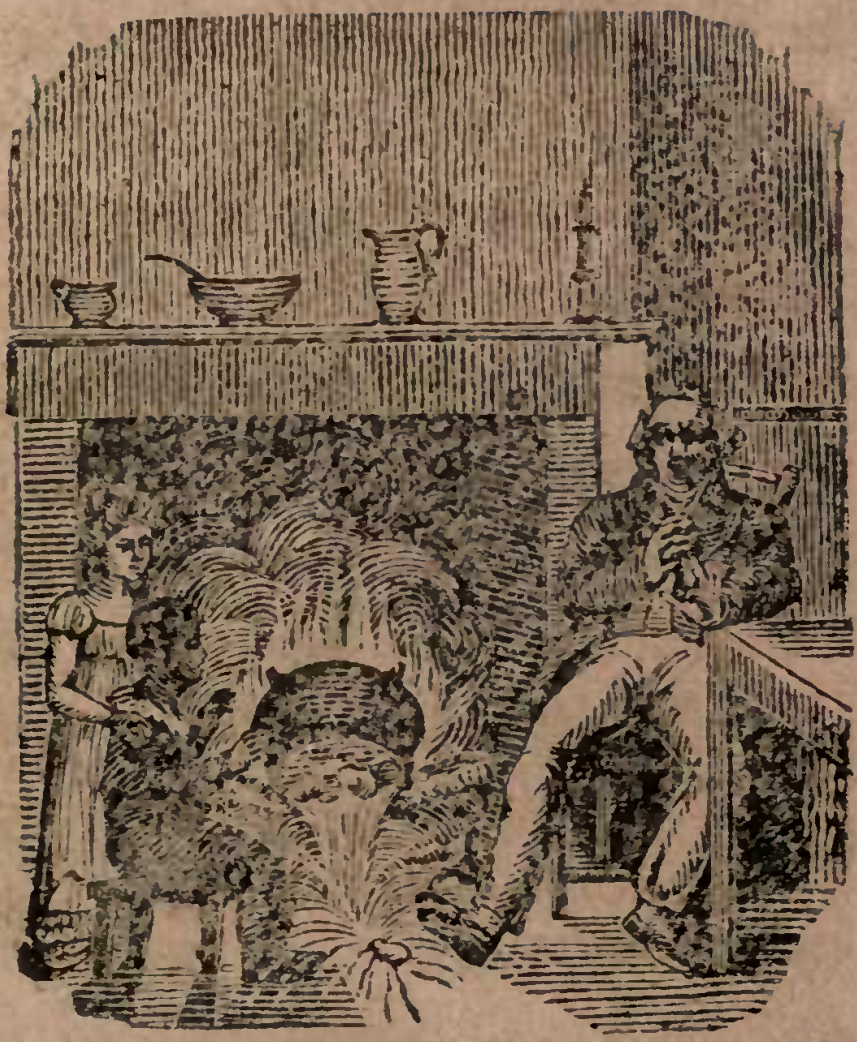
"He heard me with a shocking indifference; said *he would think of it*, and turned away rudely from me, though I assured him (what was too true, and aggravated his shame) that they resided in a corner of his own estate, and that their situation admitted of no delay. As he retired, I could perceive that he was indignant at my freedom."

Here the good landlord's looks betrayed his detestation of this unfeeling conduct; and while he thought of the miseries of this unfortunate family, he

exclaimed with the patriarch, "Cursed be his anger, for it was fierce; and his wrath, for it was cruel!" I envy not his crimson bed of state, nor his faring sumptuously every day, while he possesses an unfeeling heart and a niggardly soul.

"Better (says he) infinitely better, is that man, who, though his share of wealth may be more scanty, is blessed with a noble, a liberal heart; and such is Humanus.

"Humanus honours me with his acquaintance and his confidence. I know his heart and his feelings almost as well as he knows them himself. Descended



from worthy ancestors, he retains no small portion of their virtues. Possessing a moderate fortune, he has no idea of extravagance. He lives in a neat little house, adjoining a small freehold-farm, which descended to him from his father, and which has been held by one family for many years, at a rent that enables them to live comfortable, and to till the land with pleasure.

Unlike the tenants of Austerus, this family is always cheerful; and the father, while he ploughs his fields, is frequently visited by his little prattlers, whom he looks upon with the greatest pleasure, while he stops his well-fed horses to mount them on his plough.

Benignity.

" Nor is it only among those with whom Humanus is immediately connected, that his benevolence is felt: he seems to walk about doing good, and is never so happy as when he sees all nature rejoice, and when, as is his custom, he is seen with his grandson, feeding the parent hen and her chickens: his benign countenance seems to say, The poor and needy, how should I like to shelter you under my wing, as the hen sheltereth her chickens.

" His charity is indeed wonderful. It often puts me to the blush, when I reflect how far I fall short of it. It was but the other day that he said, " Come,

let us make a short excursion." I followed him. We entered a thatched cottage; I shall never forget the sight, nor the part the good Humanus acted on that occasion.

"On a low bed lay the very picture of wretchednes, that seemed to say, "I fly to the grave as the end of my sorrows." The feeling Humanus, whose very soul is sympathy, with soft steps approached the bed of the sufferer, his eyes full of tears, his heart oppressed with grief: "Live, (cried he) Heaven is kind! Who can tell what happiness is in reserve for you! I go to send for the physician, and shall immediately return.

Toil of the Villager.

Humanus hurried home to give directions to his servant, and came quickly back. His attentions were now renewed to the afflicted mother, for she was the wife of a poor thresher, who rises at the crowing of the cock, and toils till the going down of the sun, to maintain a numerous family.

" He now ordered some wine, which he had brought with him, to be administered with success: and the arrival of the doctor, who expressed hopes of her recovery, changed, I could perceive, the face of my friend ; the joy of his heart shone forth in his countenance; and never did he appear in my eyes more worthy

and more amiable. Happy Humanus! said I to myself; the rewards of virtue are sure. Thou already enjoyest those within thy own breast, and Heaven has still greater ones in store for thee. May thy laudable example become more universal! He repeated, frequently his visits to the humble dwelling; nor were those visits dropped till he saw there was little occasion for them: and the wife of the poor thresher is now recovered from a dangerous fever, as much through the sympathy of the good Humanus, as through the skill of the physician, his tender heart prompted him to send to her aid. She now lives useful to children, and her poor little Betty is no longer

seen weeping on the village green, for the distressed state of her suffering mother. The flail of the father now awakens echo with the dawn of the morning, and he goes on with his work rejoicing; and the whole family is often heard to pray heaven's richest blessing on the head of their compassionate friend and benefactor. Such are the charming effects of beneficence, and, such the disposition of Humanus!"

So finished our landlord his tale, and Sir Filmer prepared for bed. I shall only ask my young reader whether, upon a review of the two characters, he would be an Austerus, or an Humanus? —a sordid, selfish being, or one who

possesses a generous, a heaven-born soul? If he would wish to be the latter, let him endeavour to make all around him happy, and frequently call to mind the distresses of human life—the solitary cottage, and the weeping orphan—for graceful in youth is the tear of sympathy, and benign its influence on the sons of affliction.